



## New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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Chapter:	A	Health Services	11-4-2013
Subchapter:	6	End of Life Care	
Issuance:	700	<b>Post Funeral Assessment of Resource Family</b>	

### Post Funeral Assessment of the Resource Family 11-4-2013

The death of a child in placement affects every member of the household, including both resource parents, their own children, and other foster children in the home.

The deceased child's birth siblings may have a particularly difficult time coping with the child's death, and should be individually assessed for service/treatment needs.

Children take the lead from their parents/primary adult caregivers. If the resource parents handle the death of the child well, and return to the normal routines of the household fairly quickly, it is most likely that their own children and other foster children, likewise, will return to normalcy, despite sadness felt over the death of the child.

Although it may be a difficult subject to approach with resource parents when a child in their care has died, CP&P is still responsible to assess their readiness for and interest in accepting another foster child into their family home.

An assessment is made of the coping mechanisms displayed by the resource parents following the death of the child. The Worker considers:

- how well the family has resumed normal life (returned to routines established before the child became actively sick and/or died);
- whether the family has reconnected with family and friends with whom they were close before the child became sick/died;
- whether either resource parent is exhibiting extreme or unusual behaviors (e.g., prolonged loss of appetite or inability to sleep; withdrawal; sudden lack of interest in personal hygiene or cleanliness);
- whether the “working parent(s)” has returned to work;

- whether the family is willing to accept outside/professional help;
- if the resource parents have allowed memories of the child to take away from the family's living space/ongoing needs (e.g., the child's room and possessions are left untouched, the same as they were while he was alive, although that physical space is needed now by other members of the family, and/or to take in another foster child).

## **Post Funeral Assessment Procedures**

3-27-92

The Worker and Foster Care/Adoption Home Finding Unit member team (see [CP&P-V-A-6-400](#)) attempt to meet with members of the foster/adoptive family within two, but not more than four weeks, following the funeral and burial of the child. Outreach is initiated to:

- provide support and understanding;
- reassess individual needs for bereavement counseling/services, and the type and form of service needed (e.g., group counseling, religious guidance/support, individual counseling);
- initiate referrals to service providers as needed/available in the community; and
- help the foster/adoptive parents begin to assess their own, individual readiness to accept another foster/pre-adoptive child into the home.

For families who need more time to determine when and/or whether they will be ready to accept another foster/pre-adoptive child into their home, CP&P and the foster/adoptive parents draw up a bereavement recovery plan which details services which may benefit/support the family, and a time table for additional home visits by Division staff while services commence.

A family may attend counseling concurrent with accepting another foster/pre-adoptive child into the home.

The Foster Care/Adoption Home Finding Unit staff is responsible for subsequent follow-up home visits and monitoring of the plan.

## **Allowing Time to Regroup**

11-4-2013

For situations in which there was a prolonged dying period/terminal phase of the child's illness, one or both resource parents, in all likelihood, put much energy and time into caring for that one child. Following the ultimate death of the child, the other children in the resource home, as well as the marital/civil union couple, may need some quality time to spend with one another.

The CP&P staff member working with the resource family -- an objective party from outside the family unit -- may suggest to the resource parents that they allow some time to pass before accepting another foster/pre-adoptive child into the home, to give family members a chance to reconnect with each other, and regroup.

Additional services may or may not be necessary.

**Assessment by a Mental Health Professional** 3-27-92

If the readiness of the foster/pre-adoptive family to accept another child cannot be determined by CP&P or is in question, and the Division needs to know whether and/or when to again place a child in the home, the family may be referred to a mental health professional for an assessment/evaluation. All members of the foster/pre-adoptive family are encouraged to participate in this process.

The RDS is consulted if the name of a mental health service provider is needed (see [CP&P-V-A-1-900](#)).

See [CP&P-V-A-6-400](#) for procedures to pay for this service.